

No. 962

7p

AUS. N.Z. 25c

Commando

WAR STORIES IN PICTURES



Death IN THE Desert

DE HAVILLAND MOSQUITO MK. IV

WEAPONS of WAR — No 24



NOSE OF MK. VI FIGHTER VERSION,
FOUR M/GUNS AND FOUR CANNON

SPECIFICATION

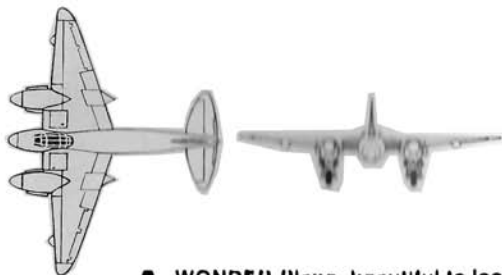
POWER PLANT — TWO ROLLS-ROYCE
"MERLIN" TWELVE-
CYLINDER, VEE,
LIQUID-COOLED
ENGINES POWERING
D.H. THREE-BLADED
CONSTANT SPEED,
FULLY-FEATHER-
ING AIRSCREWS.

DIMENSIONS — SPAN — 54ft. 2in.
LENGTH — 40ft. 4in.
HEIGHT — 17ft. 5in.

WEIGHT (LOADED) — 19,093 lb.

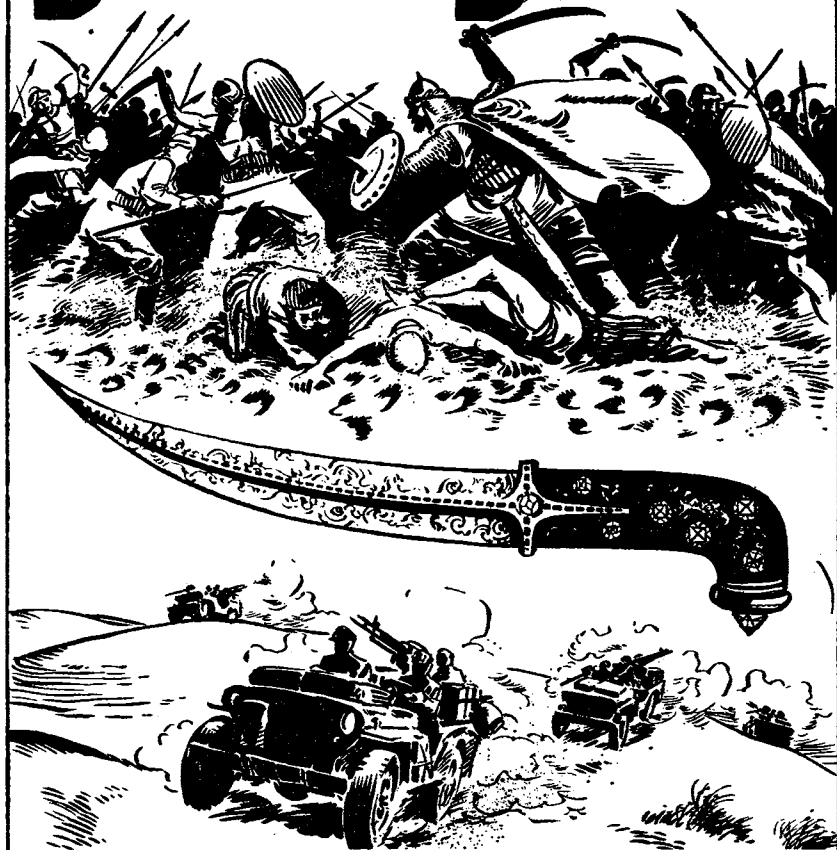
BOMB LOAD — 4000 lb.

SPEED — 380 mph.



A WONDER Plane, beautiful to look at, successful in everything it did, and able to lick the fastest enemy fighters to a frazzle — that was the amazing "Mosquito", the fighter bomber that left the Germans wondering what had hit them. Built of steel-strong plywood at a time when supplies of metal were running low, it used its amazing speed to penetrate deep into enemy territory and drop its 4000lb bomb-load from roof-top level with hair-splitting accuracy.

DEATH IN THE DESERT



THE DESERT HAS SEEN MANY ARMIES CROSS ITS BARREN WILDERNESS. SPEARS, SWORDS, KNIVES - ALL HAD FLASHED UNDER THE BURNING SUN. AND THEN CAME THE MODERN ARMIES WITH BOMB, BULLET, AND SHELL. YET, OF ALL THESE, ANOTHER FORCE SPREAD ITS OWN TERROR. THIS WAS AS DEADLY AS ANY WEAPON MAN USED. THIS WAS... THE CURSE OF KAR!

THE DESERT HAD SEEN MANY WAR-LORDS, ALL FAMED FOR COURAGE AND RUTHLESSNESS. NONE, HOWEVER, MATCHED KAR ACHMED. HIS LONG REIGN AS UNDISPUTED LORD OF THE DESERT ENDED AS IT HAD BEEN LIVED - VIOLENTLY.



EVEN WITH HIS ENEMIES ALL AROUND HIM, KAR DID NOT LACK COURAGE. THE FIGHT HE PUT UP WOULD BE SPOKEN OF AROUND CAMP FIRES FOR YEARS.

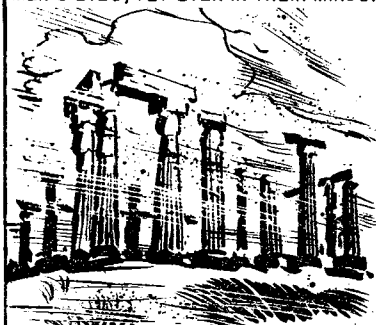


BUT NOW KAR WAS TO DIE AT THE HANDS OF HIS OWN MEN. HE DIED HARD, WITH HIS DEFIANT BATTLE-CRY AS A CURSE UPON HIS LIPS. AND AS KAR DIED, SO HIS LEGEND WAS BORN.



AND THE LEGEND OF KAR'S TREASURE GREW AS WELL. THE WAR-LORD HAD LOOTED AND PHILAGED ALL THROUGH HIS LONG RULE. AND JUST WHERE HIS CACHE OF TREASURE WAS, NO ONE HAD KNOWN. MANY SEARCHED, BUT NONE HAD EVER FOUND IT.

AND SO IT WAS THAT KAR'S TREASURE LAY HIDDEN, OUT OF THE SIGHT OF MEN'S EYES, YET EVER IN THEIR MINDS.



YET OF THE MEN WHO WENT SEARCHING MANY PERISHED MYSTERIOUSLY. PERHAPS THE CURSE WAS AT WORK?

THEN AFTER MANY GENERATIONS, MODERN WAR CAME TO THE DESERT. THE ROAR OF ENGINES SHATTERED THE BROODING SILENCE OF CENTURIES - AND SOON THE DIN OF BATTLE WOULD THUNDER AS THE GIANTS CLASHED, WITH THE DESERT AS THEIR ARENA.



TO LIEUTENANT NEIL ANDREWS, GOING TO JOIN HIS INFANTRY BATTALION, THE DESERT WAS SOMETHING NEW. SO WAS WAR, AND HE WAS UNCOMFORTABLY AWARE OF JUST HOW RAW HE WAS. BUT HIS DRIVER WAS A VETERAN.

SHORT
CUT, THIS, SIR!
WHEN YOU'VE BEEN
OUT AS LONG AS I HAVE,
THE DESERT'S JUST
LIKE OLD PICCA-
DILLY.

GIVE ME
PICCADILLY! AND
TO THINK I USED TO SAY
IT WAS TOO CROWDED.
WHAT A WILDER-
NESS!

THEN, ABRUPTLY, THE ENGINE COUGHED, SPLUTTERED -- AND DIED. NEIL AND THE CORPORAL CLIMBED OUT.

WHAT'S UP,
THEN... OH, CRIKEY,
THE SUMP'S CRACKED --
WE'VE SEIZED
SOLID!

WHAT NOW,
I WONDER? AND
NOT A SOUL AROUND
FOR MILES!



BUT NEIL WAS WRONG. TWO PARTIES WERE IN THE VICINITY. ONE, MADE UP OF CAPTAIN PAUL PORTLAND AND SERGEANT NICK KEARNEY, WATCHED THE APPROACH OF THE OTHER WITH INTEREST.



EVEN AS THE PAIR BESIDE THE TRUCK HEARD THE ARABS APPROACH, A SHOT CRACKED OUT - AND NEIL WAS ALONE.



THE PAIR ON THE DUNE WATCHED -
WITH LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR THE MAN
FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE.

HE MOVED
PRETTY FAST. NOT
BAD. THINK HE CAN
USE THAT RIFLE?

IF HE
CAN'T, HE'S
HAD IT.



CALMLY NEIL BROUGHT THE RIFLE UP
TO HIS SHOULDER. HE MIGHT HAVE
BEEN CLAY-PIGEON SHOOTING - SOME-
THING HE WAS VERY GOOD AT.

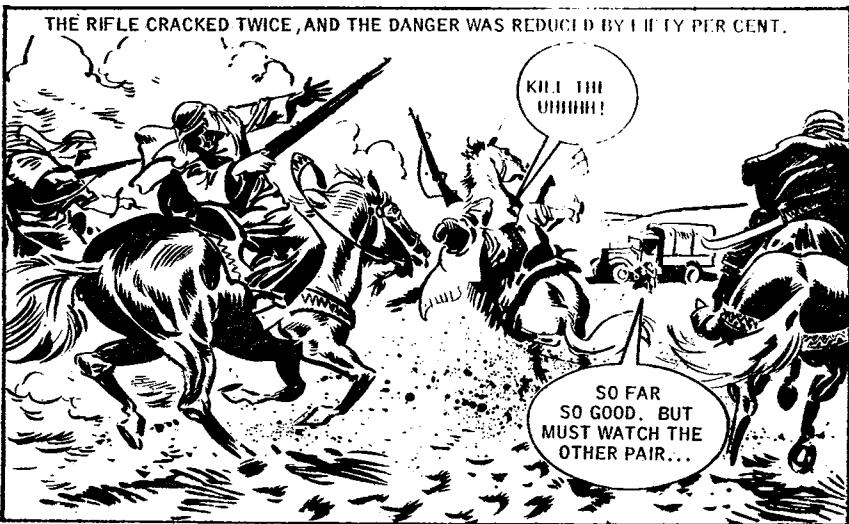
EASY,
BOY! MUST
MAKE EVERY SHOT
COUNT...



THE RIFLE CRACKED TWICE, AND THE DANGER WAS REDUCED BY FIFTY PER CENT.

KILL THE
OTHERS!

SO FAR
SO GOOD. BUT
MUST WATCH THE
OTHER PAIR...



AGAIN NEIL'S QUICK REACTIONS SAVED HIM. BULLETS MEANT FOR HIS BODY THUDDERED HARMLESSLY INTO THE SAND AS HE ROLLED UNDER THE TRUCK.



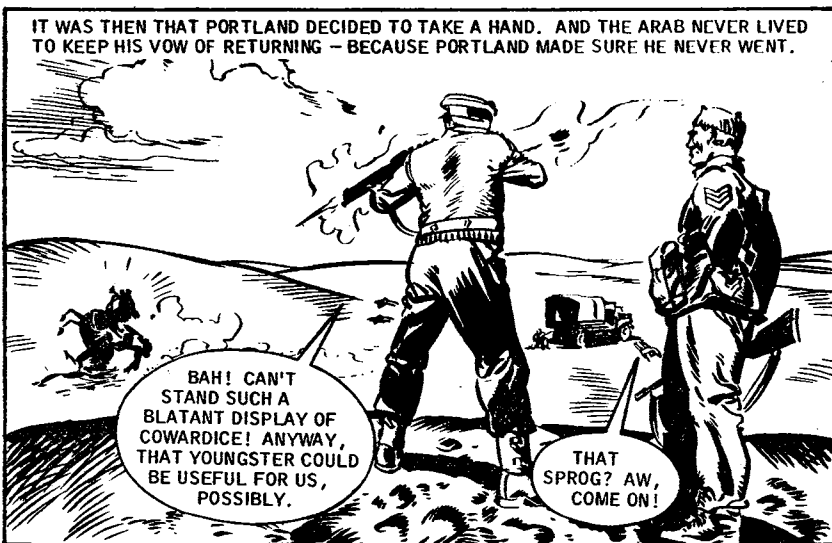
THE SUDDENNESS OF NEIL'S MOVE CAUGHT THE ARABS BY SURPRISE. ONE WAS KNOCKED OUT OF THE SADDLE BEFORE HE KNEW IT - THE OTHER LET THIS RATTLE HIM.



THE LONE SURVIVING ARAB DECIDED THE ODDS WERE NOW NOT TO HIS LIKING. AS HE LEFT, HE THREW NEIL A PROMISE HE'D BE BACK - WITH OTHERS.



IT WAS THEN THAT PORTLAND DECIDED TO TAKE A HAND. AND THE ARAB NEVER LIVED TO KEEP HIS VOW OF RETURNING - BECAUSE PORTLAND MADE SURE HE NEVER WENT.



NEIL WAS GLAD TO SEE THE PAIR - EVEN KEARNEY'S FEROCIOUS SCOWL DIDN'T PUT HIM OFF.

I THINK YOU MIGHT APPRECIATE A LIFT, OLD CHAP?

THAT WOULD BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT, ER - SIR. I'M ON MY WAY TO THE FIFTH GREYSHIRES - OR I WAS, ANYWAY. DON'T KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN NOW, THOUGH.

HUH! YOUNG WHELP! PROBABLY STILL AT SHCOOL WHEN I SAW MY FIRST JERRY. BEST OF BRITISH LUCK TO THE GREYSHIRES, HAVING THAT FOR AN OFFICER.

PORTI AND EXPLAINED HE COMMANDED A SMALL, MOBILE STRIKING FORCE. FOUR JEEPS, TWELVE MEN. OR IT HAD BEEN TWELVE, AS ONE MAN HAD BEEN LOST ON THE RAID THEY WERE JUST RETURNING FROM.

LOOK, OLD CHAP, OBVIOUSLY YOU CAN'T GET TO WHERE YOU'RE GOING NOW, SO HOW ABOUT JOINING OUR LITTLE LOT? PLENTY OF ACTION, AND I CAN SWING IT.

WHY, THAT WOULD BE SIMPLY GREAT, SIR.

"SIMPLY GREAT, SIR!" BAH, WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT RISKING YOUR NECK! I'M GETTING FED UP OF IT.

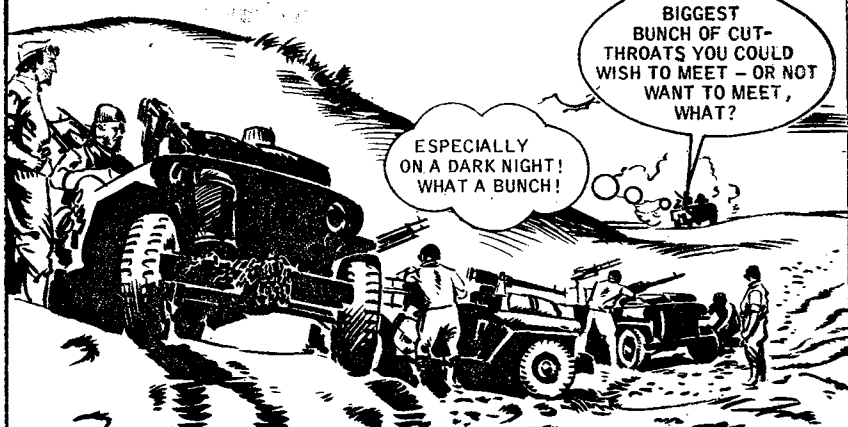
SO THEY SET OFF – THEN ABRUPTLY PORTLAND RAPPED OUT AN ORDER, AND KEARNEY STOPPED DEAD. STARTLED, NEIL WAS CONVINCED THEY WERE IN DIRE THREAT OF ATTACK. KEARNEY GRUNTED FOR HIM TO STAY PUT, AND EXPLAINED –



PORTLAND HAD BEEN A PROMINENT HISTORIAN, WITH A SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE DESERT, BEFORE HE BECAME A CAPTAIN LEADING COMBAT PATROLS. IT WAS AN ODD COMBINATION.



SOON THEY MET THE REST OF PORTLAND'S MEN AT A PRE-ARRANGED SPOT. THE CAPTAIN CAUGHT NEIL'S REACTION TO HIS MEN AND CHUCKLED.



ESPECIALLY
ON A DARK NIGHT!
WHAT A BUNCH!

BIGGEST
BUNCH OF CUT-
THROATS YOU COULD
WISH TO MEET - OR NOT
WANT TO MEET,
WHAT?

'PORTLAND'S PIRATES', AS HE CALLED THEM, WERE VERY UNLIKE THE OTHER SMALL UNITS THAT OPERATED IN THE DESERT. THEY WERE KILLERS, UTTERLY RUTHLESS - AND ALREADY QUESTIONS WERE BEING ASKED IN HIGH QUARTERS, OVER INCIDENTS THAT NO ARMY LIKES.

KEARNEY GAVE A SUDDEN WOLFISH GRIN AS HE SAW NEIL'S FACE BECOME MORE THAN A LITTLE THOUGHTFUL.



SECOND
THOUGHTS? THIS
AIN'T NO BOY SCOUT TROOP.
THERE'S JUST ONE WAY
TO GET OUT OF OUR
MOB, AND THAT'S
FEET-FIRST!

PORTLAND'S TACTICS WERE SIMPLE. AMBUSH A CONVOY, PULVERISE IT, THEN RACE AWAY INTO THE DESERT TO REGROUP AND REARM.

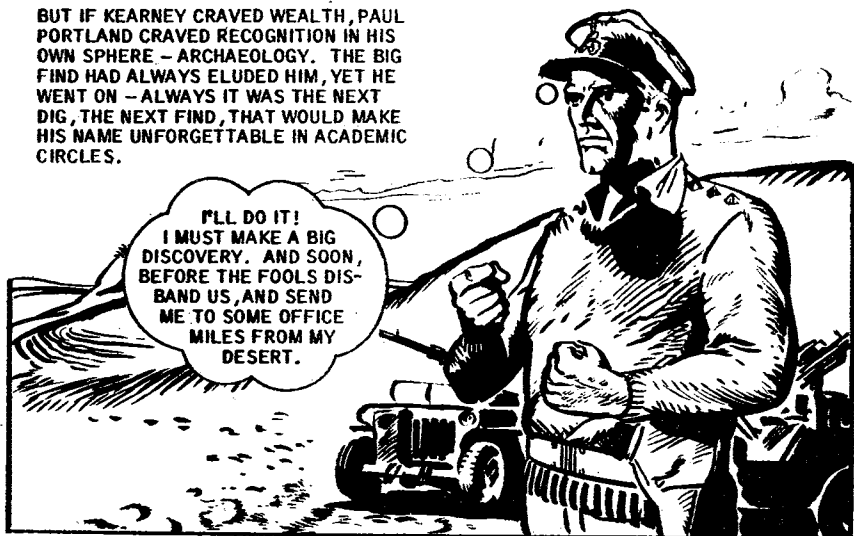


SURPRISE,
YOU SEE. WE HIT
'EM HARD, THEN GET
THE HECK OUT.

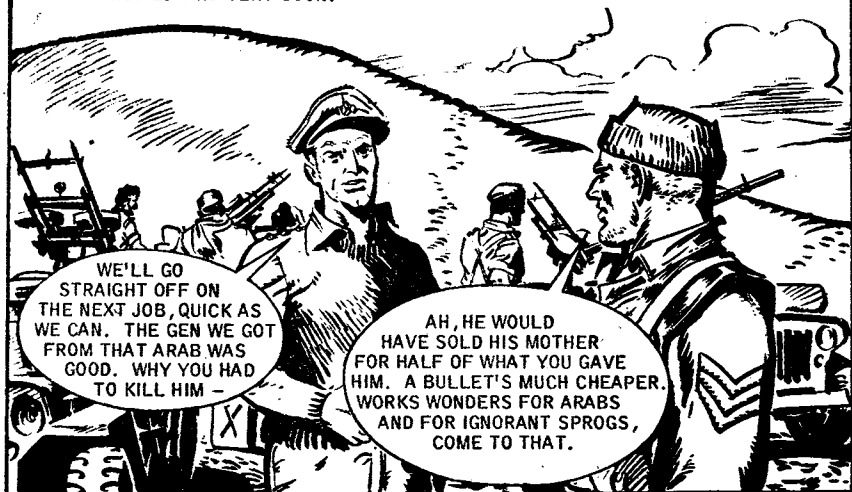
SOUNDS -
ER - EFFECTIVE,
SIR!



BUT IF KEARNEY CRAVED WEALTH, PAUL PORTLAND CRAVED RECOGNITION IN HIS OWN SPHERE - ARCHAEOLOGY. THE BIG FIND HAD ALWAYS ELUDED HIM, YET HE WENT ON - ALWAYS IT WAS THE NEXT DIG, THE NEXT FIND, THAT WOULD MAKE HIS NAME UNFORGETTABLE IN ACADEMIC CIRCLES.



NEITHER PORTLAND NOR KEARNEY KNEW IT, BUT BOTH WERE TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THEIR DESIRE. AND VERY SOON.



WE'LL GO STRAIGHT OFF ON THE NEXT JOB, QUICK AS WE CAN. THE GEN WE GOT FROM THAT ARAB WAS GOOD. WHY YOU HAD TO KILL HIM -

AH, HE WOULD HAVE SOLD HIS MOTHER FOR HALF OF WHAT YOU GAVE HIM. A BULLET'S MUCH CHEAPER. WORKS WONDERS FOR ARABS AND FOR IGNORANT SPROGS, COME TO THAT.

PORTLAND'S CASUAL QUESTION AS TO WHY THE SERGEANT SEEMED TO DISLIKE NEIL BROUGHT A STARTLING REACTION.



HMMMM! I THINK KEARNEY NEEDS EVEN MORE WATCHING THAN I'D THOUGHT. HE'S SO FULL OF HATE HE'S LIKE A WALKING BOMB.

HIS SORT MAKE ME SICK, THAT'S WHY! SPOON-FED - POSH - USED TO THE BEST WHILE I HAD TO FIGHT ALL THE WAY.

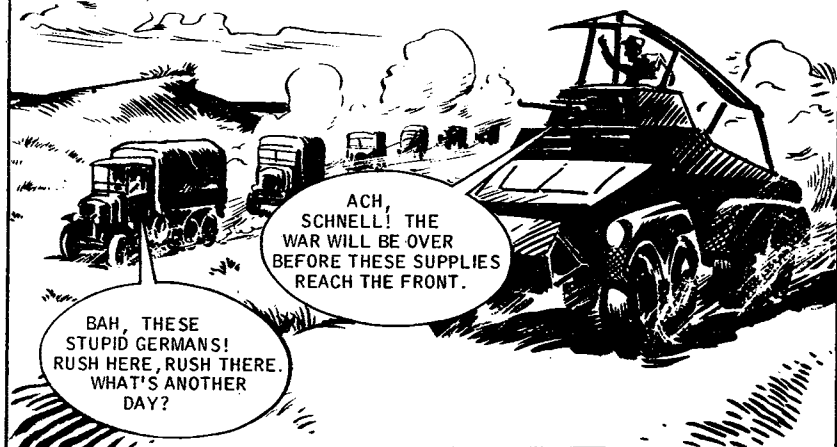
NEXT DAY, THEY WERE OFF ON THEIR NEXT JOB. IT WAS PLAIN THAT NEIL WASN'T TO GET OFF WITHOUT CONTINUAL RIBBING FROM KEARNEY.



TEN MILES TO THE SOUTH, PORTLAND'S NEXT TARGET RUMBLED OVER THE DESERT - AN ITALIAN SUPPLY CONVOY. NOT HAVING SEEN ANY ACTION, ONE ITALIAN DRIVER WISHED FOR IT HEARTILY; LITTLE KNOWING IT WAS ON THE WAY.



THE ITALIAN CONVOY HAD A GERMAN ESCORT, WHICH MADE FOR BAD FEELING ON EACH SIDE. TO THE ITALIANS, IT SEEMED THEIR OWN MEN WERE NOT THOUGHT GOOD ENOUGH. AND THE GERMANS KNEW THAT ONLY TOO WELL.



THEN THE DUNES ERUPTED JEEPS. PORTLAND'S PIRATES WERE IN BUSINESS AGAIN.



BEFORE THE STARTLED ESCORT COULD DO A THING, THE JEEPS RACED DOWN THE CONVOY LIKE WOLVES, LEAVING A WAKE OF DESTRUCTION.



THEN CAME AN INCIDENT TYPICAL OF KEARNEY AND THE PIRATES. HE BARKED AN ORDER OUT TO THE GUNNER AS DAZED ITALIANS CAME SPLUTTERING FROM THE SMOKE, ALL FIGHT KNOCKED OUT OF THEM.



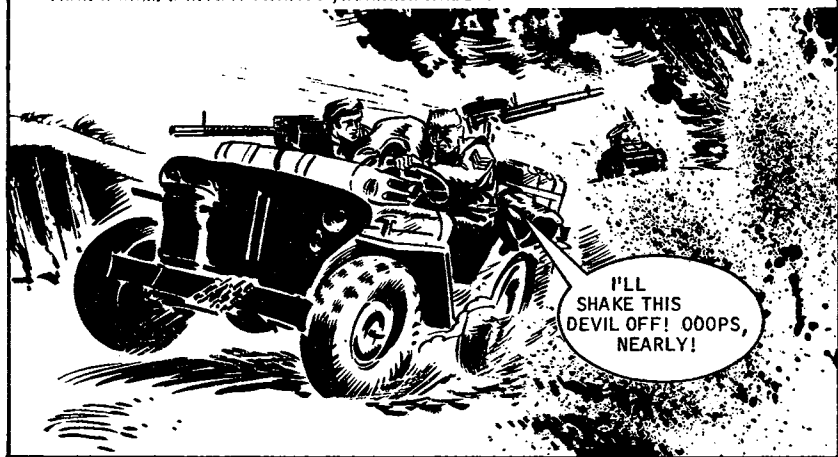
IT WAS MURDER OF A PARTICULARLY COLD-BLOODED KIND. THE MACHINE-GUNNER REGARDED HIM BLANDLY.



THEN CAME RETRIBUTION, AS THE ESCORT RECOVERED FROM ITS INITIAL SURPRISE. THE GERMAN ARMoured CAR SELECTED NEIL'S JEEP, AND OPENED UP WITH EVERYTHING IT HAD. FOR THE MACHINE-GUNNER, IT WAS ENOUGH.



KIARNY WAS A GOOD DRIVER. HAD HE NOT BEEN SO, THE JEEP WOULD HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A TWISTED, BURNING WRECK.



AS IF THE DEAD GUNNER WERE NO MORE THAN A SACK OF POTATOES, THE SERGEANT PUSHED HIM ROUGHLY FROM THE JEEP.

LET'S GET
RID OF THIS BUCKO!
NO ROOM FOR PASSEN-
GERS ON THIS TRIP.
SO LONG, LEW!

TALK ABOUT
CALLOUS! IF I EVER
SURVIVE THIS RAID,
I'M GETTING OUT OF
THIS LOT.

THE GERMAN ESCORT, GRIMLY BENT ON DELIVERING VENGEANCE, WAS THWARTED WHEN A SAND-STORM BLEW UP. GRIMLY KEARNEY PLOUGHED ON.

THIS IS
LUCKY. THEY
WOULD HAVE GOT US,
OTHERWISE.

MAYBE, BUT
WE'D BETTER HOLE
UP, OR THIS STORM WILL
FINISH US OFF JUST AS
EFFECTIVELY.

FOR TWO HOURS THE STORM RAGED AROUND THEM, AS IF THE VERY DESERT HAD RISEN UP AGAINST THE STRANGERS UPON IT. IT WAS BY SHEER GOOD FORTUNE THAT NEIL GLIMPSED THE DIM SHAPE OF A RUIN. GRATEFULLY THEY DROVE INTO ITS SHELTER.



THIS
THING COULD
BLOW FOR HOURS,
I SUPPOSE.

SO WHAT?
AT LEAST IT GOT
THOSE SQUARE-HEADS
OFF OUR TAIL, AND
IT'LL COVER OUR
TRACKS.

THEN, AS ABRUPTLY
AS IT HAD ARISEN,
THE STORM ENDED.
AFTER THE HOWLING
FURY OF THE WIND,
THE SILENCE WAS
EERIE, ALMOST EVIL.




HECK, THIS
PLACE COULD GIVE
A BLOKE THE
CREEPS.

YOU'RE
RIGHT. LET'S
GET THE JEEP DUG
OUT, AND GET
OFF.



THEIR THOUGHTS WERE SWEEPED ASIDE BY THE SUDDEN WHINE OF BULLETS, AND THE SAVAGE CRIES OF MEN INTENT UPON A KILL. BOTH MEANT THE SAME THING - DANGER.



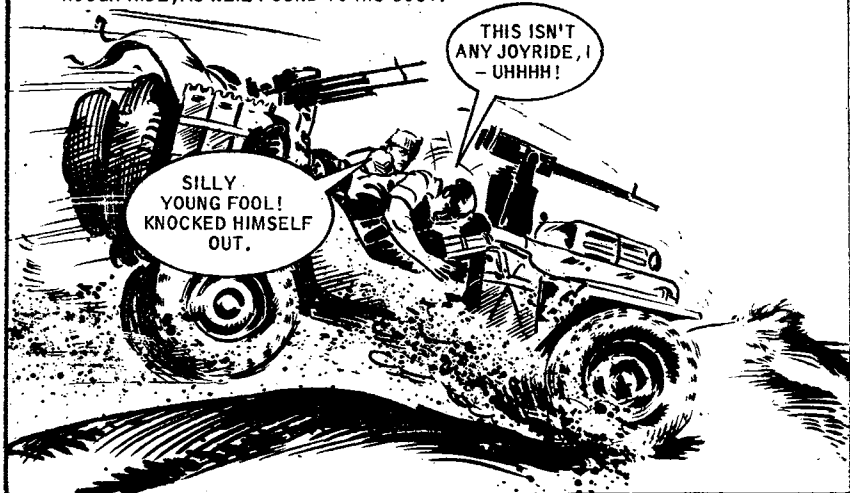
HECK! IT
MUST BE A BUNCH
OF THE LOT THAT
JUMPED ME! SOUNDS
LIKE THEY MEAN
BUSINESS.

WELL, WE
AIN'T IN NO STALLED
TRUCK, AND I AIN'T
HANGIN' AROUND TO
HAGGLE!

KEARNEY GUNNED THE
JEEP, BUT FAILED TO
GAIN A LEAD - AND THE
SAVAGE YELLS GREW
LOUDER.

KILL, MY
BROTHERS! LET
US LEAVE THE BONES
OF THE REDNECKS TO
BLEACH UNDER OUR
SUN.

USING ALL HIS CONSIDERABLE SKILL, KEARNEY DROVE FOR HIS LIFE - IT WAS A ROUGH RIDE, AS NEIL FOUND TO HIS COST.



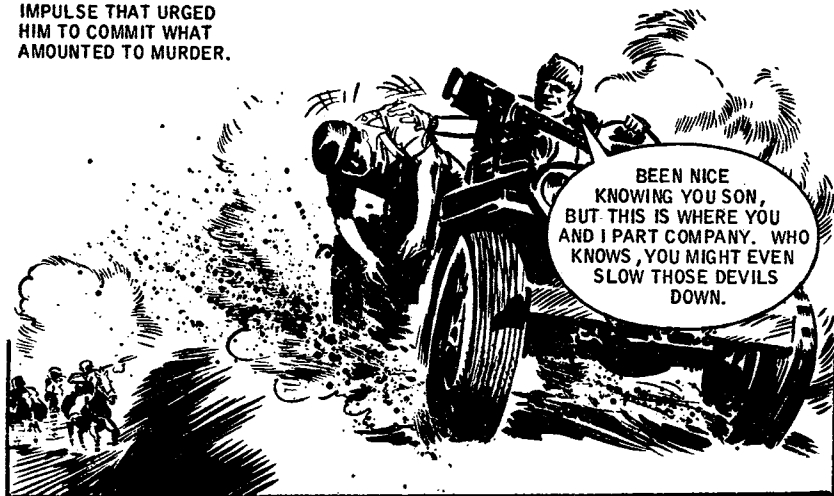
EVEN IN THE MIDST OF DIRE PERIL, KEARNEY'S MIND COULD REGISTER GREED. NEIL'S UNCONSCIOUSNESS OFFERED AN OPPORTUNITY -



ALREADY THE CURSE OF KAR HAD SELECTED A VICTIM. KEARNEY DIDN'T KNOW IT - BUT IT WAS HIM. YET HE HAD A VICTIM IN MIND HIMSELF - NEIL!



AND SO HE OBEYED AN
IMPULSE THAT URGED
HIM TO COMMIT WHAT
AMOUNTED TO MURDER.



NEIL'S LIMP BODY ROLLED TOWARDS HIS PURSUERS
AS KEARNEY DROVE AWAY FROM THEM. FROM THE
LEADER, A SHOUT RANG OUT.



ROUGH HANDS DRAGGED NEIL TO HIS FEET, AS HIS SENSES CAME BACK. EVEN ROUGHER VOICES HURLED ABUSE AT HIM THAT HE BARELY UNDERSTOOD.

SOON THE OTHER REDNECK WILL BE IN OUR HANDS. HE MAY ALSO LIVE TO PROVIDE SPORT.



THE CHASE CONTINUED - JEEP VERSUS HORSE, WITH KEARNEY'S LIFE THE PRIZE.

BLAST THEM! WON'T THEY EVER GIVE UP?



THEN AFTER ANOTHER TEN MINUTES OF FURIOUS PURSUIT, THE ARABS SUDDENLY BROUGHT SNORTING, PANTING, LATHERED MOUNTS TO A HALT. KEARNEY TOOK A DESPERATE GLANCE OVER HIS SHOULDER - AND COULD HARDLY CREDIT HIS EYES, FOR THE PURSUIT HAD ENDED.

STOP, MY BROTHERS! WE GO NO FURTHER!

THEY'VE PULLED UP! BUT WHY?

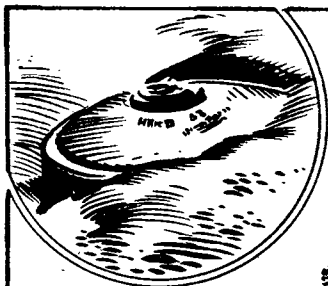


AS A JUBILANT KEARNEY FELT THE TERROR EASE FROM HIM, HE HAD NO IDEA THAT AN EVEN GREATER DANGER HEMMED HIM IN ON ALL SIDES.

THE FOOL
CANNOT KNOW WHAT
LIES AROUND HIM.
THE STONES THAT
EXPLODE! HE IS
DOOMED!



IT WAS WHEN HE SAW THE SMALL DEPRESSION IN THE SAND THAT KEARNEY FIRST BECAME HORRIBLY AWARE OF HIS PREDICAMENT. THE FULL AWARENESS OF HIS SITUATION HIT HIM LIKE A SLAP IN THE FACE.



AAAH, NO!
MINES! I'M DRIVING
THROUGH A MINEFIELD.
THOSE ARABS MUST
HAVE KNOWN.

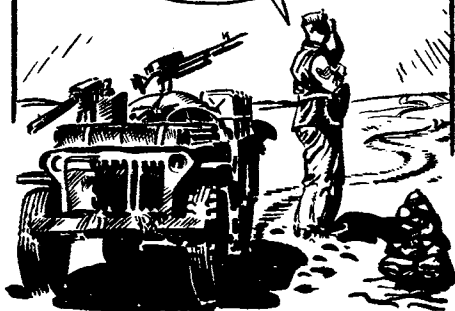


THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING TO DO.
KEEP GOING - AND HOPE FOR THE
BEST. SWEAT TRICKLED DOWN HIS
FACE...



THEN, AFTER WHAT SEEMED AN ETERNITY,
HE SAW A SMALL PILE OF STONES IN THE
SAND - WHICH HE KNEW MEANT SAFETY.

OH,
BLIMEY...NEVER
AGAIN...



HE FELT NO REMORSE AT WHAT HE HAD DONE - JUST A SAVAGE EXULTATION THAT HE
HAD ESCAPED WITH HIS OWN LIFE - AND HAD THE PRECIOUS CURIO.



AS KEARNEY DROVE OFF TO REACH BRITISH LINES, AND EVENTUALLY CAPTAIN PORTLAND, NEIL FACED SHEIK EL RASHID, LEADER OF THE MARAUDING ARABS. THIS EVIL OLD MAN'S REPUTATION FOR CRUELTY WAS WELL KNOWN. HOWEVER, SO WAS HIS SENSE OF HUMOUR.



THE ARABS DID NOT UNDERSTAND ENGLISH, BUT THEY DIDN'T APPROVE OF BACK-CHAT. NEIL FOUND HIMSELF ON HIS KNEES, A MERE HEART-BEAT FROM DEATH, WHEN -



EL RASHID THEN SPOKE IN ENGLISH AGAIN, AND NEIL WONDERED IF HE HAD HEARD RIGHT. FOR THE ARAB ASKED - DID HE PLAY CHESS?

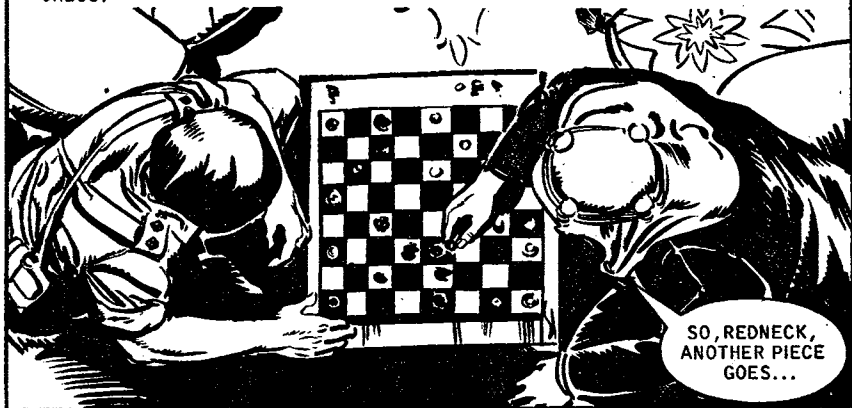


OBVIOUSLY NEIL'S ANSWER SAVED HIM. NEXT MOMENT HE FOUND HIMSELF FACING EL RASHID IN THE CHESS GAME OF HIS LIFE - FOR HIS LIFE.



AND THE ARAB DREW HIS HAND ACROSS HIS THROAT IN AN UNMISTAKABLE GESTURE. OPPOSITE HIM, NEIL SWALLOWED HARD AND NODDED.

SO NEIL FORGOT EVERYTHING AND CONCENTRATED. IT WASN'T EASY, BUT IT WAS HIS ONLY CHANCE OF SURVIVAL. KEARNEY'S ACT OF TREACHERY HAD, AS YET, NOT COST HIM HIS LIFE, THANKS TO AN ARAB WHO WAS MAD UPON TWO THINGS...LOOT - AND CHESS.



MEANWHILE KEARNEY FINALLY MADE IT BACK TO PORTLAND'S PIRATES. HE SAID LITTLE OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED, HARDLY MENTIONING NEIL AT ALL.



LYING OLD DEVIL, THOUGHT KEARNEY. THE ONLY THINGS PORTLAND WAS EVER DELIGHTED TO SEE HAD TO BE AT LEAST TWO THOUSAND YEARS OLD.

THE SERGEANT PULLED OUT HIS HANDKERCHIEF, AND THE LITTLE DAGGER CAME WITH IT. PORTLAND SAW THE AMULET FALL - AND HIS EYES GLEAMED. SWIFTLY HE BENT TO PICK IT UP.



WHEN HE SAW WHAT IT WAS HE HELD, PORTLAND'S WHOLE MANNER CHANGED ABRUPTLY FOR, UNLIKE NEIL OR KEARNEY, HE COULD SEE NOT ONLY WHAT IT WAS, BUT WHAT IT COULD MEAN.



EACH HAD FALLEN UNDER THE DESIRE TO OWN THE LITTLE DAGGER. FOR PORTLAND, THE ARCHAEOLOGIST, IT MEANT FAME. FOR KEARNEY, THE CROOK, IT MEANT HIS LIFE-LONG DREAM OF WEALTH.



PORTLAND HAD READ OF THE CURSE BUT RECKONED IT TO BE AN ABSURD SUPERSTITION. BUT ALREADY THE CURSE OF KAR HAD BEGUN ITS WORK, CORRUPTING THEIR MINDS WITH ITS POWER.

KEARNEY LOOKED AT HIS OFFICER WITH NARROWED EYES.

PORTLAND KNEW THE THREAT KEARNEY COULD PRESENT, YET THE SERGEANT WAS VITAL, FOR ONLY HE KNEW WHERE THE AMULET HAD BEEN FOUND.



YET IF PORTLAND AND KEARNEY THOUGHT ONLY THEY KNEW OF THE AMULET, THEY WERE WRONG. FOR NEIL HAD WON HIS GAME FOR LIFE - AND EL RASHID WAS A MAN OF HIS WORD, DESPITE HIS OTHER FAULTS.



THEN EL RASHID'S MOOD CHANGED SUDDENLY - AND GREW SLY. NEIL WATCHED HIM UNEASILY. HE KNEW THE WILY OLD ARAB WAS UP TO SOMETHING - AND HE WAS RIGHT.



AND SO THEY PLAYED ONCE MORE. THIS TIME FOR NEIL'S IMMEDIATE RELEASE, SHOULD HE WIN.

AND WIN NEIL DID, GETTING AN EVEN MORE VIOLENT REACTION THAN BEFORE. FOR RASHID KNEW HE COULD NOT FIND ANY WAY AROUND THIS DEFEAT.



TEN
THOUSAND
CURSES! THIS GAME
WILL DRIVE ME
MAD!

MY GAME, I
THINK. AND IMMEDIATE
RELEASE, WITH, AS I THINK
WE AGREED, A HORSE,
SUFFICIENT WATER,
AND A GUIDE.

THEN CAME AN INTERRUPTION, AS A GRIMY FIGURE WAS HUSTLED IN. NEIL STARED AT THE YOUNG MAN WHO WORE THE UNIFORM OF HIS ENEMY. A LUFTWAFFE PILOT.



THIS
REDNECK CRASHED
IN HIS MACHINE, O GREAT
ONE. SHALL WE
KILL HIM?

IF HE
CAN PLAY CHESS,
NO. IF NOT,
WELL...

BUT TO RASHID'S QUESTION, LUFTWAFFE PILOT CARL BAYERN SHOOK HIS HEAD. HE WAS NO CHESS PLAYER. NEIL THOUGHT QUICKLY. HE COULD NOT LET COLD-BLOODED MURDER TAKE PLACE BEFORE HIS EYES.



AND SO ONCE AGAIN TWO INTELLECTS LOCKED IN MOCK BATTLE OVER THE CHESS BOARD, EACH FIGHTING AS GRIMLY AS ANY WARRIOR WITH A SWORD.

THE OUTCOME WAS FOR A WHILE, IN DOUBT — THEN IT ENDED AS THE TWO PRECEDING ONES HAD, IN DEFEAT FOR THE ENRAGED ARAB CHIEF.



BOTH NEIL AND CARL BAYERN WERE, ACCORDING TO THEIR DIFFERENT NATION'S GOVERNMENTS, ENEMIES, YET THEY PARTED AS FRIENDS.



A DAY LATER, CAPTAIN PORTLAND AND SERGEANT KEARNEY RECEIVED RATHER A SHOCK. IT SEEMED NEIL ANDREWS HAD RETURNED FROM THE DEAD.



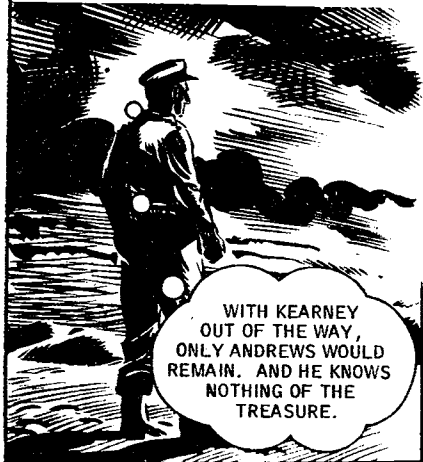
NEIL TOLD HIS TALE - AND KEARNEY SWIFTLY MADE ONE UP - THEN NEIL SAW THE AMULET. CASUALLY HE PICKED IT UP AS PORTLAND GAPED AT HIM.



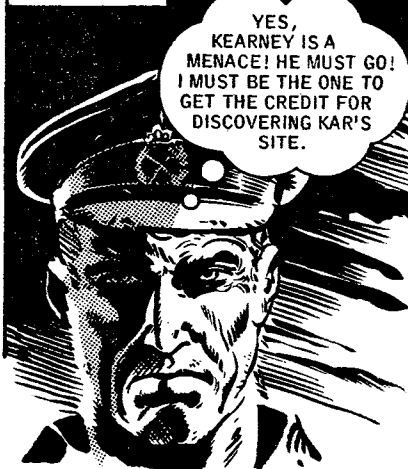
PORTLAND'S MIND RACED. SO NOW ANOTHER EXISTED WHO COULD LEAD HIM TO THE TREASURE OF KAR. AS NEIL LEFT THE TENT -



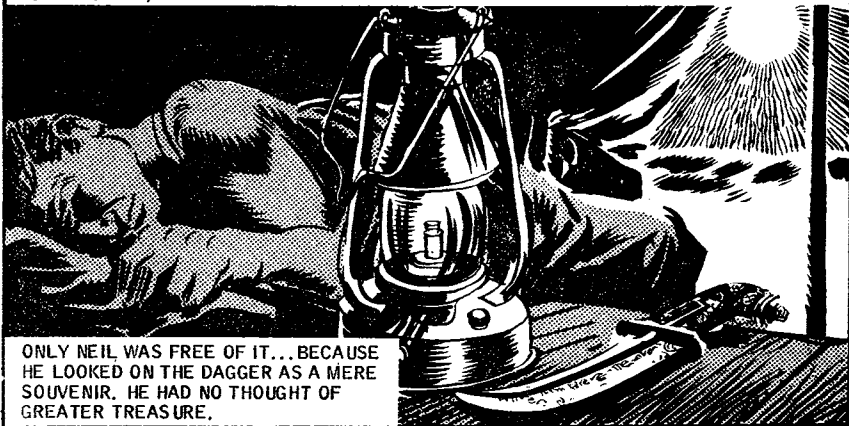
THE DAY BEFORE THEIR NEXT RAID, PAUL PORTLAND'S THOUGHTS WERE AS DARK AS NIGHT SHADOWS BENEATH THE DUNES. ALL WERE OF KAR AND HIS TREASURE, AND OF HOW TO LAY HANDS ON IT.



HIS MIND DWELT ON THE ACCLAIM THAT DISCOVERY OF THE TREASURE WOULD BRING HIM. NOT FOR HIM WEALTH - BUT RECOGNITION BY HIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLEAGUES.



ALREADY THE CURSE OF KAR WAS DOING ITS DEADLY WORK. FIRST NICK KEARNEY, AND NOW PAUL PORTLAND, CAME UNDER ITS SPELL. AND HAD PORTLAND LOOKED CLOSELY AT THE PATTERN ON THE BLADE, HE WOULD HAVE READ AN INSCRIPTION - "HE WHO COVETS KAR, COVETS DEATH. ONE LIFE WILL BE GIVEN - AND ONE TAKEN."



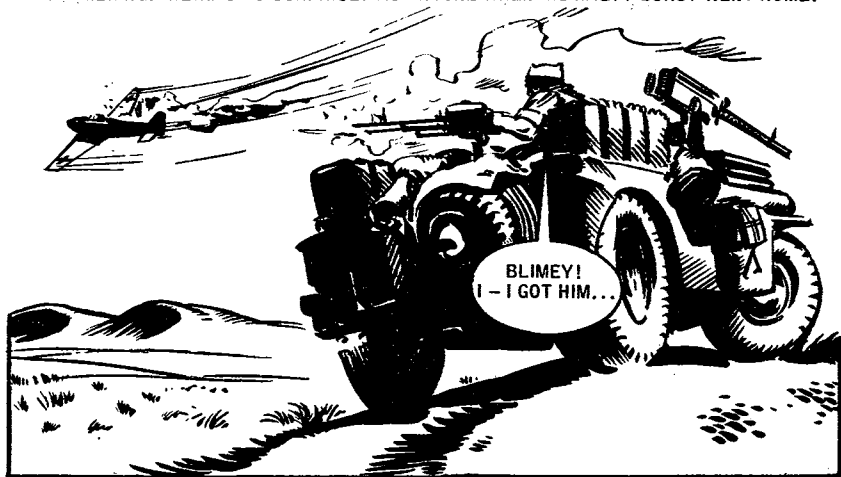
AND LATER THAT DAY, NICK KEARNEY, OUT COLLECTING AMMO FOR THE COMING OPERATION, SEEMED ALL SET TO MAKE THE INSCRIPTION COME TRUE, AS HE WAS BOUNCED BY A PROWLING Me109.



THE GERMAN PILOT GRINNED AS HE CAME HOWLING IN, THUMB UPON THE BUTTON. HE COULD HARDLY MISS. BUT THE DEADLY STREAM OF FIRE NEVER CAME, FOR HIS GUNS HAD JAMMED.



AS THE FIGHTER SHOT PAST OVERHEAD, KEARNEY'S GUNNER SET HIS WEAPONS HAMMERING. HE WAS AS SURPRISED AS ANYONE WHEN HIS HASTY BURST WENT HOME.



KEARNEY GULPED AS HE WATCHED THE FIGHTER BURN - BY ALL THE RULES, IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN HIS JEEP ON FIRE.



WHEN KEARNEY ARRIVED HOME THAT NIGHT, PORTLAND DECIDED TO ACT. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT IF HE DIDN'T REMOVE KEARNEY, THE SERGEANT WOULD REMOVE HIM.



PORTLAND ROLLED THE GRENADE INTO THE TENT AND DIVED FOR THE SHADOWS. KEARNEY HAD ONLY SECONDS, AND WASTED THOSE IN USELESS STARING.



PORTLAND'S PLAN WAS EFFECTIVE, AND PORTLAND'S PIRATES NOW LACKED ONE MAN.



AND NO ONE WAS MORE SHOCKED AT WHAT APPEARED TO BE A TRAGIC ACCIDENT THAN CAPTAIN PAUL PORTLAND HIMSELF.



HE - HE
MUST HAVE BEEN
PRIMING GRENADES.
HE TOOK RISKS WITH
EVERYTHING.

POOR
DEVIL! COMES
THROUGH ALL THAT,
AND ONE SILLY
MISTAKE...

THE MEMORY OF HOW THE RAIDERS HAD DISPLAYED COMPLETE RUTHLESSNESS ON HIS FIRST ATTACK WITH THEM WAS FRESH IN NEIL'S MIND. SO MUCH SO, HE MENTIONED HIS DESIRE TO LEAVE THEM AFTER THE NEXT RAID. PORTLAND NODDED KINDLY.

I TOO HAVE
NOTICED A CERTAIN...
ER... OVER-ENTHUSIASTIC
TENDENCY IN THE MEN. POOR
KEARNEY WAS PERHAPS TO
BLAME FOR THIS - HE DID
CHIVVY THE MEN INTO
THIS ATTITUDE.

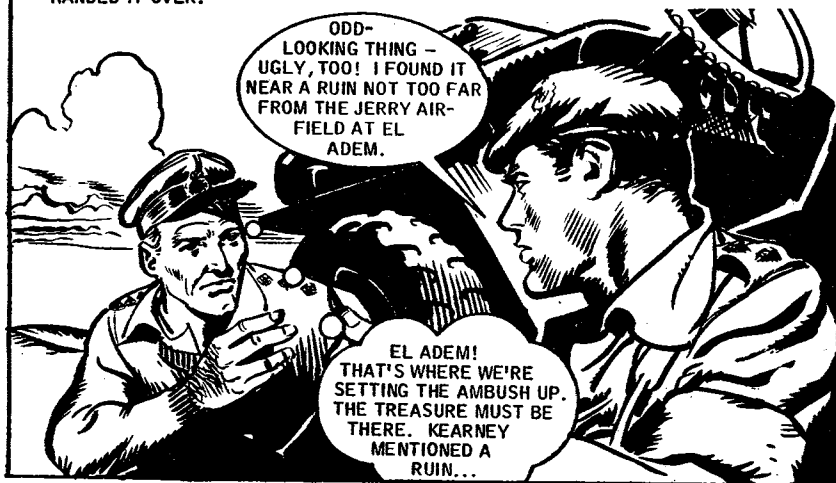


PORTLAND HAD GOOD REASON TO DISPLAY WARMTH TO NEIL. AND THE FACT THAT NEIL INTENDED TO LEAVE DID NOT DISTURB HIM. HE KNEW THIS WOULD PROBABLY BE THE PIRATES' LAST RAID ANYWAY, FOR THE AUTHORITIES WERE ALREADY ASKING AWKWARD QUESTIONS.

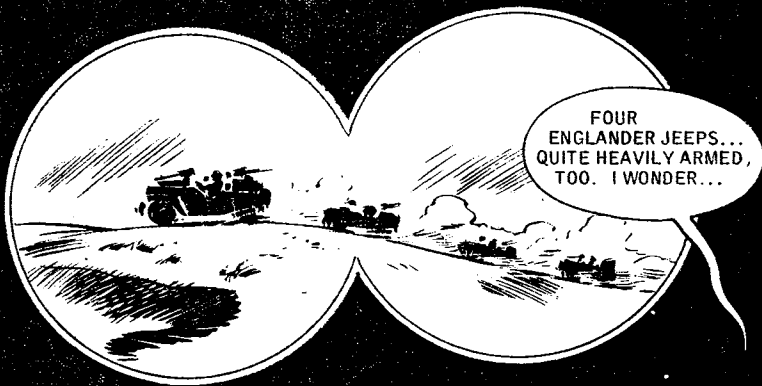
SO THEY SET OFF. AT THE FIRST HALT, AS CASUALLY AS HE COULD, PORTLAND QUESTIONED NEIL ABOUT THE INCIDENT WHERE HE HAD FALLEN FROM THE JEEP - AND JUST BEFORE.



EQUALLY CASUALLY, PORTLAND ASKED FOR ANOTHER LOOK AT THE AMULET, WITH A QUESTION ABOUT JUST WHERE NEIL HAD FOUND IT. QUITE UNSUSPECTING, NEIL HANDED IT OVER.



EAGERLY PORTLAND HURRIED THEM ON - YET, AS THE AMBUSHERS DROVE TO THE AREA THEY INTENDED TO USE AS A BASE, THEY WERE THEMSELVES RUNNING INTO AN AMBUSH.



GAUGING THE ROUTE THE FOUR JEEPS WOULD TAKE, THE OFFICER COMMANDING THE TROOP OF FOUR GERMAN ARMoured CARS STOPPED WONDERING AND SNAPPED INTO ACTION. IT HAD BEEN JUST LUCK THAT HE HAD SEEN THE BRITISH FIRST.



AND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF A DUNE, IT WAS FATE THAT DECIDED PORTLAND TO ACCOMPANY NEIL ON A RECONNAISSANCE, LEAVING THE OTHER THREE JEEPS BEHIND.



BUT PORTLAND'S RECONNAISSANCE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH TACTICS - HE WANTED TO PIN-POINT THE SITE OF THE RUIN FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.

PORTLAND AND NEIL HAD NOT BEEN GONE FIFTEEN MINUTES WHEN THE GERMANS STRUCK. AS THE BRITISH JEEPS SAT MOTIONLESS, ARMoured CARS BURST INTO LIFE, GUNS ERUPTING FLAME AND SHELL.



IT WAS PORTLAND'S KEEN EARS THAT CAUGHT THE SOUND OF FIRING AND THE FAINT SMUDGE OF SMOKE THAT TOLD OF BATTLE.

LOOKS AS IF WE'VE BEEN BOUNCED.

NOW WHAT?

IT WAS PLAIN THAT PORTLAND'S PIRATES HAD CEASED TO EXIST AS AN OPERATIONAL UNIT. PORTLAND HAD ONLY ONE ANSWER TO NEIL'S QUESTION.

WE PULL OUT, THAT'S WHAT. MOVE!

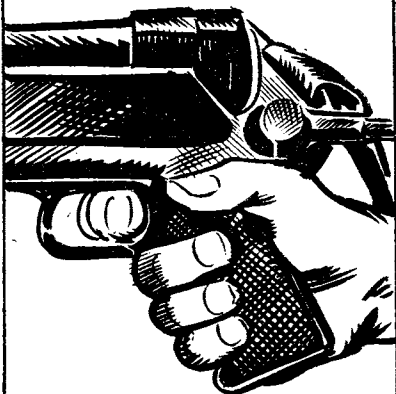
BUT EVEN AS THEY SLID AND SCRAMBLED DOWN THE SIDE OF THE DUNE, IT WAS ALREADY TOO LATE, AS A BURLY FIGURE APPEARED IN THEIR PATH. THE GERMAN COMMANDER HAD PLACED HIS FORCES WELL.

GOING SOMEWHERE, ENGLANDER?

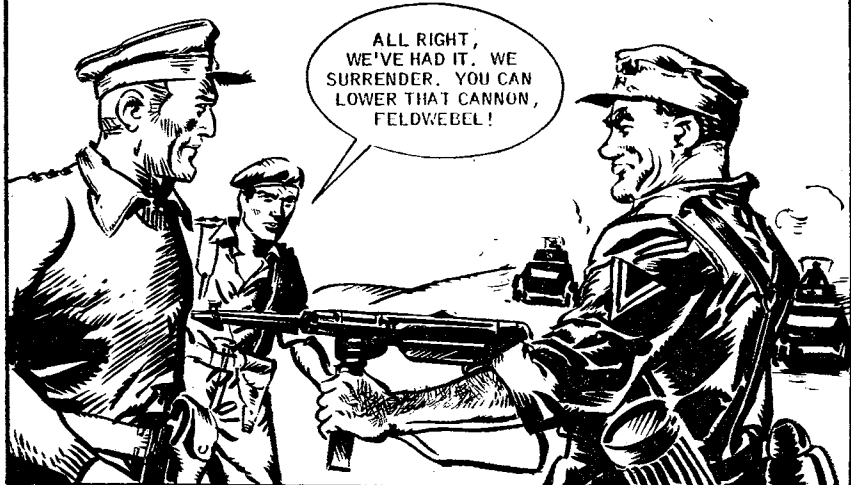
FOR PAUL PORTLAND, THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME WAS SLIPPING AWAY. HE WAS ALMOST IN TEARS...



IT WAS PLAIN THAT THE FELDWEBEL DIDN'T BELIEVE IN TAKING PRISONERS. HIS FINGER TIGHTENED ON THE TRIGGER, THE MUZZLE OF THE WEAPON AIMED AT PORTLAND'S CHEST.



THEN CAME A ROAR OF ENGINES, AND THE BRITISH WERE IN A POSITION THAT OFFERED NO SENSIBLE REASON FOR RESISTANCE. NEIL SPOKE URGENTLY TO THE NAZI.



HAD NOT AN OFFICER ARRIVED THEN, IT WOULD HAVE GONE ILL FOR THE TWO PRISONERS. BUT THE OFFICER DID NOT SHARE HIS FELDWEBEL'S VIEWS UPON TREATMENT OF PRISONERS.



THAT THE FELDWEBEL DIDN'T THINK MUCH OF THE OFFICER'S ORDERS WAS OBVIOUS. IT WAS ALSO CLEAR THAT HE DIDN'T THINK MUCH OF HIS ENEMIES.



IT WAS EQUALLY OBVIOUS THE FELDWEBEL BELIEVED IN THE SPOILS OF WAR. FIRST HE TOOK PORTLAND'S WATCH, THEN HE STARTED ON NEIL.



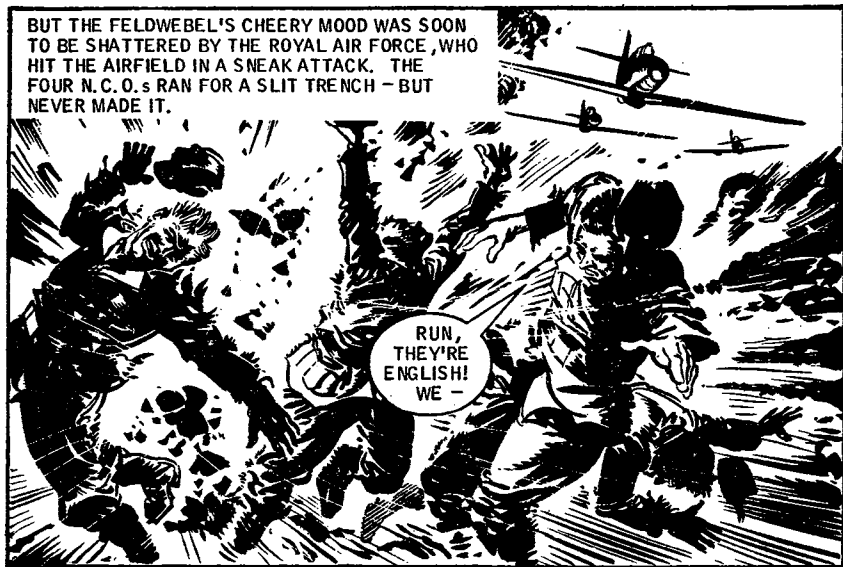
AS THE TWO PRISONERS WERE LED AWAY, THE FELDWEBEL'S EYES GLEAMED AT THE SIGHT OF THE AMULET. THE ENGLISH OFFICER HAD BEEN RIGHT - HE WOULD HAVE KILLED FOR IT.



WHEN HE REACHED THE AIRFIELD AT EL ADEM, THE GERMAN FELT GOOD. A HOME LEAVE COMING UP, AND A VALUABLE PIECE OF JEWELLERY IN HIS POCKET. ADMITTEDLY IT WAS ODD ABOUT THAT COLD SHIVER HE HAD FELT WHEN HE SLIPPED IT INTO HIS POCKET, BUT STILL...



BUT THE FELDWEBEL'S CHEERY MOOD WAS SOON TO BE SHATTERED BY THE ROYAL AIR FORCE, WHO HIT THE AIRFIELD IN A SNEAK ATTACK. THE FOUR N.C.O.s RAN FOR A SLIT TRENCH - BUT NEVER MADE IT.



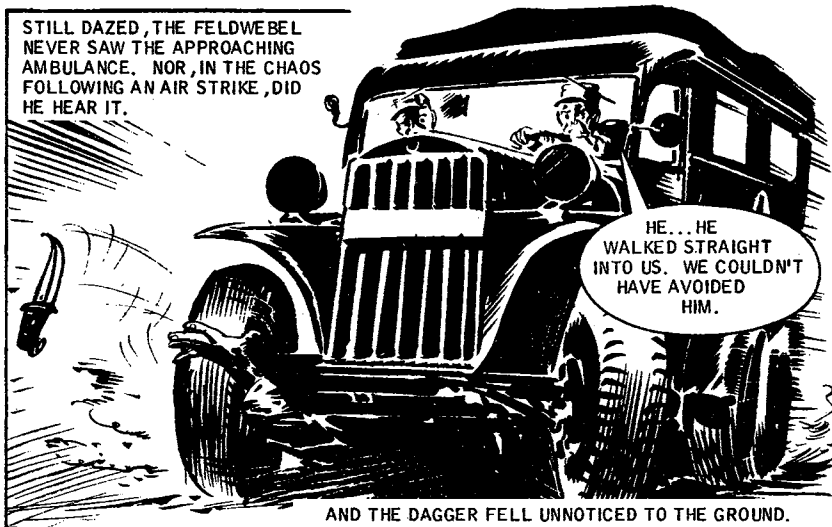
IT SEEMED INCREDIBLE THAT THE FELDWEBEL COULD HAVE SURVIVED SUCH A BLAST. CERTAINLY HIS COMRADES HADN'T.



GROGGILY FELDWEBEL MULLER STUMBLED AWAY FROM THE SHAMBLES.



STILL DAZED, THE FELDWEBEL NEVER SAW THE APPROACHING AMBULANCE. NOR, IN THE CHAOS FOLLOWING AN AIR STRIKE, DID HE HEAR IT.



AND THE DAGGER FELL UNNOTICED TO THE GROUND.

AN HOUR LATER, A GERMAN AIR PATROL RETURNED WEARILY TO THE BATTERED FIELD. AMONG THE FLYERS WAS CARL BAYERN - THE GERMAN NEIL HAD SAVED FROM THE ARABS.



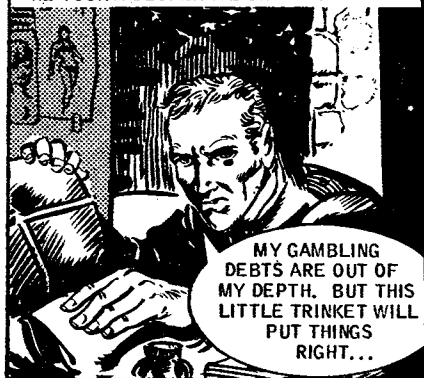
PURELY BY CHANCE, HIS EYES FELL UPON AN OBJECT UPON THE GROUND. HE STOOPED - AND THE DAGGER OF KAR WAS IN HIS POSSESSION.



THE SIGHT OF THE AMULET HAD FILLED BAYERN WITH NO GREAT DESIRE TO OWN IT, RATHER A MILD REPUGNANCE. YET HIS ROOM-MATE EXPERIENCED A FAR DIFFERENT EMOTION - AN OVERWHELMING DESIRE TO OWN IT. FOR OBERLEUTNANT HEINRICH SCHWARTZ NEEDED A LOT OF MONEY.



SCHWARTZ WATCHED CARL PUT THE DAGGER IN HIS LOCKER. THEN, WHEN NEWS CAME THROUGH THAT CARL HAD BEEN SEEN TO GO DOWN IN THE DESERT, HE TOOK A DESPERATE CHANCE.




ON HIS NEXT PATROL, SCHWARTZ TOOK THE LITTLE DAGGER WITH HIM. PERHAPS THE CHILL HE FELT WAS MERELY NERVOUSNESS AT THE COMING FLIGHT.




SCHWARTZ'S FLIGHT FLEW STRAIGHT INTO BAD TROUBLE. AFTER A HECTIC RUN ON A HEAVILY-FORTIFIED TARGET, HIS WAS THE ONLY AIRCRAFT IN A FIT STATE TO FLY - AND THIS ONLY JUST.

IF I GET
BACK TO BASE, I'LL
BE LUCKY. AND BALING
OUT IN THIS WILDERNESS
WOULD BE WORSE THAN
COPPING IT LIKE THE
OTHERS.



BUT SCHWARTZ DID MAKE IT. THOUGH HOW, CONSIDERING THE STATE OF HIS AIRCRAFT, WAS ANYBODY'S GUESS.

YOUR GUARDIAN
ANGEL MUST HAVE
BEEN PROPPING YOU UP
ALL THE WAY HOME,
HEINRICH.



THIS DAGGER,
HAS BROUGHT ME
MORE LUCK THAN I
THOUGHT.

IT WAS IRONIC THAT CARL BAYERN'S AIRCRAFT HAD LANDED JUST AFTER SCHWARTZ HAD TAKEN OFF. SCHWARTZ WOULD NOT HAVE FELT SO CHEERFUL HAD HE KNOWN CARL HAD TURNED UP.



BEFORE HE REACHED HIS QUARTERS, CARL SAW SOMETHING THAT BROUGHT HIM TO AN ABRUPT STANDSTILL. HIS FRIEND NEIL WAS ONE OF THE BRITISH PRISONERS AT THE AIRFIELD.



AND THE MORE THE QUIET GERMAN THOUGHT ABOUT IT, THE MORE HE REALISED HE MUST RISK EVERYTHING TO HELP HIS FRIENDS. SO ENGROSSED WAS HE THAT HE GAVE NO THOUGHT TO CHECKING THAT THE AMULET WAS STILL THERE.

AND THAT NIGHT HE DID JUST THAT. HE WAS GLAD THE SENTRY WAS ONE OF THE FEW FANATICAL NAZIS ON THE FIELD. KNOCKING HIM OUT HAD BEEN A PLEASURE.



CARL HAD PAID OFF HIS DEBT. NEIL AND PORTLAND CREPT CAUTIOUSLY TO THE WAITING CAR.



DAWN THE NEXT DAY BROUGHT NO SIGN OF PURSUIT. BUT IT DID BRING THE SNARL OF A FIGHTER AIRCRAFT.



BUT HEINRICH SCHWARTZ HAD NO HOSTILE INTENTIONS. HE WAS ON HIS WAY BACK FROM ANOTHER BASE WHERE HE HAD FLOWN SOME SPARES, AND HE DECIDED TO GIVE SOME OFFICER A BUZZING. ALREADY THE AMULET IN HIS JACKET POCKET HAD A BUYER, AND LIFE WAS GOOD.



HIS FIRST SWEEP WAS LOW - VERY LOW.

HE'S MAD!
A FOOT LOWER AND
HE'D HAVE HIT OUR
WINDSCREEN.

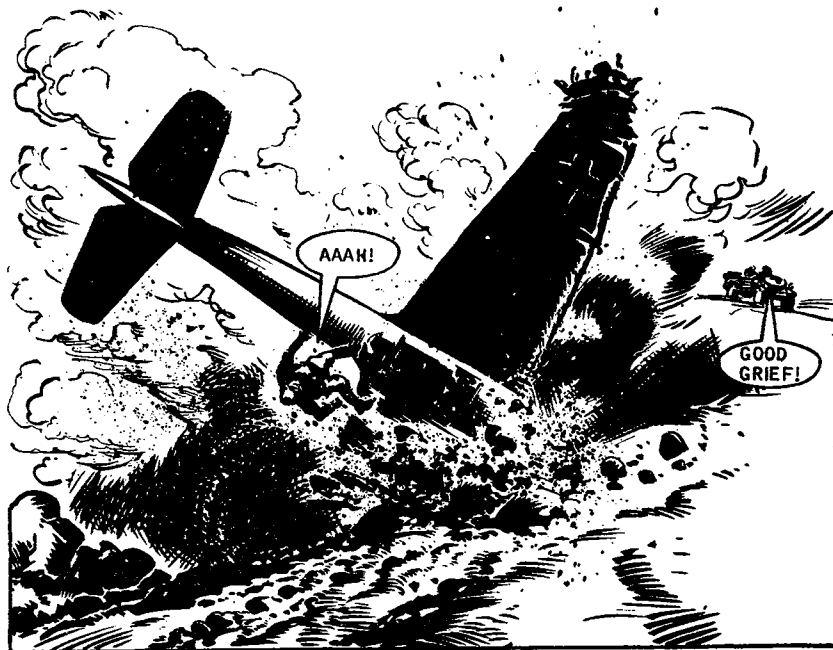


BUT, PERFECTLY AS THE SWOOP HAD BEEN JUDGED, HIS BANK AWAY WAS NOT AS WELL JUDGED...

NEIN...



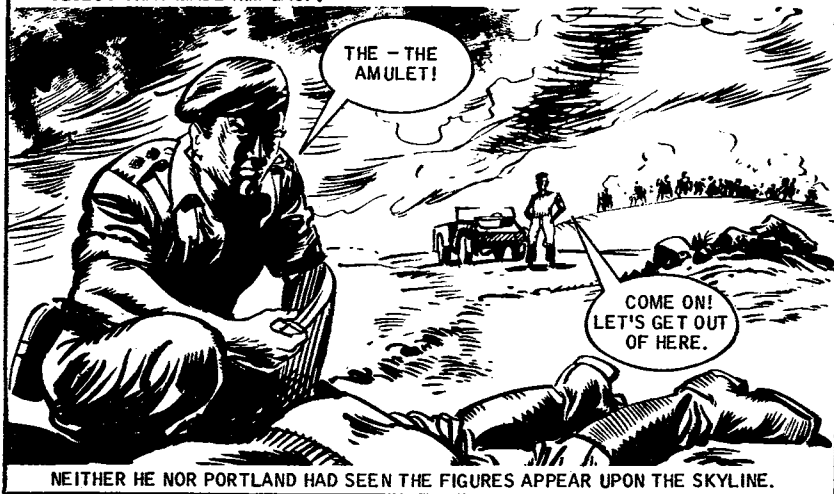
WITH A CRASH THAT MADE THE WITNESSES WINCE, HEINRICH SCHWARTZ'S AIRCRAFT SMASHED INTO THE DESERT FLOOR.



ONLY NEIL MADE ANY ATTEMPT TO FIND THE PILOT.



THE PILOT WAS DEAD. BUT SEARCHING FOR IDENTIFICATION, NEIL PULLED OUT AN OBJECT THAT MADE HIM GASP.



NEITHER HE NOR PORTLAND HAD SEEN THE FIGURES APPEAR UPON THE SKYLINE.

THE SPITEFUL
CRACK OF A
RIFLE ANNOUNCED
THE ARABS'
PRESENCE.

ARABS!

OH, NO!
NOT THAT LOT
AGAIN! THIS IS
WHERE I CAME IN...
OR GO OUT.



EL RASHID WAS DELIGHTED TO SEE WHO MADE UP HALF OF HIS LATEST BATCH OF PRISONERS. NEIL GROANED INWARDLY.

AH, 'TIS
THE ONE WHO IS
LUCKY AT THE WAR-
GAME OF CHESS!

DON'T
TELL ME! WHERE'S
THE TABLE?



PORTLAND, UNTIL NOW MOSTLY DULL AND APATHETIC, SUDDENLY STIFFENED WHEN HE SAW THE ARAB HAND EL RASHID THE AMULET. HIS EYES TOOK ON A WILD GLEAM



THIS WAS
FOUND UPON ONE
OF THE PRISONERS.
IT IS...

I KNOW
WHAT IT IS, DOLT.
THE DAGGER OF
KAR.

THE ARABS WERE NOT TEMPTED BY THIS TREASURE. AFTER ALL, THEY KNEW ONLY TOO WELL JUST HOW RUTHLESS THE CURSE OF KAR WAS.

IT WAS TOO MUCH. WITH AN ALMOST ANIMAL-LIKE CRY, PORTLAND LEAPT FORWARD - AND SNATCHED THE AMULET.



GIVE ME
THAT!

LIKE A MAN DEMENTED, HE RAN OUTSIDE - AND
A PASSING RIDER WAS SWIFTLY DISMOUNTED.



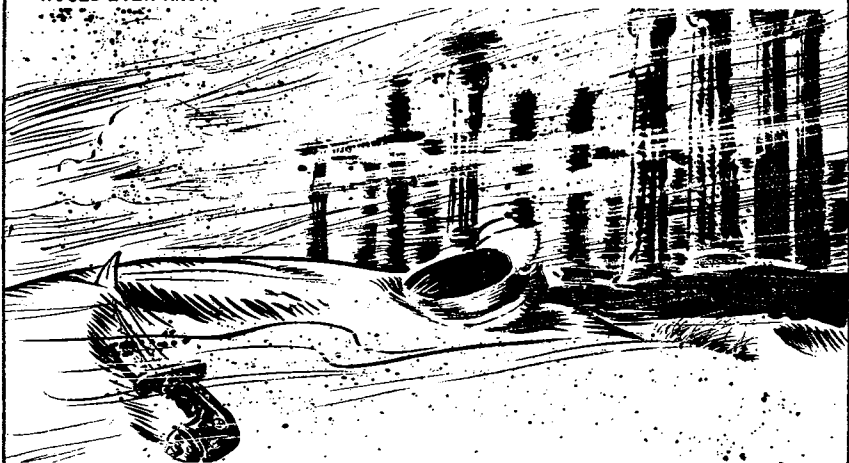
LIKE A MADMAN PORTLAND RODE
OFF, INTO THE LIMITLESS,
WATERLESS DESERT...



NEIL SIGHED. HE WOULD NEVER UNDERSTAND PORTLAND. YET HE NEEDED ALL THE CONCENTRATION HE COULD MUSTER NOW, FOR EL RASHID WAS ON FORM. HALF-WAY THROUGH THE GAME AN ARAB ENTERED.



DEEP IN THE DESERT, PAUL PORTLAND FOUND THAT WHICH HE SOUGHT - BUT NO ONE WOULD EVER KNOW.



FAME, WEALTH, RECOGNITION - ALL THESE WOULD EVADE THE MADMAN, AS HE PERISHED IN THE LONELY WASTES. THE CURSE OF KAR HAD STRUCK AGAIN.

AND ONCE AGAIN, EL RASHID'S CHESS BOARD WAS HURLED ASIDE. ONCE AGAIN NEIL ANDREWS RODE AWAY A FREE MAN. THE ROOKIE OFFICER WAS NO LONGER RAW TO THE DESERT — THE DESERT WHERE, FOR A WHILE AT LEAST, MEN WOULD BE FREE FROM THE CURSE OF KAR.

FAREWELL,
EL RASHID — AT
LEAST I ENJOYED
MY WARS WITH
YOU...

ONE DAY PERHAPS NEIL WOULD MEET UP WITH CARL BAYERN AGAIN WHEN THE WAR WAS OVER. AND ONE DAY SOME CRAZY FOOL WOULD TEMPT THE CURSE OF KAR AGAIN. NOT THAT HE'D EVER LIVE TO TELL OF THE TREASURE...

Commando
THE END

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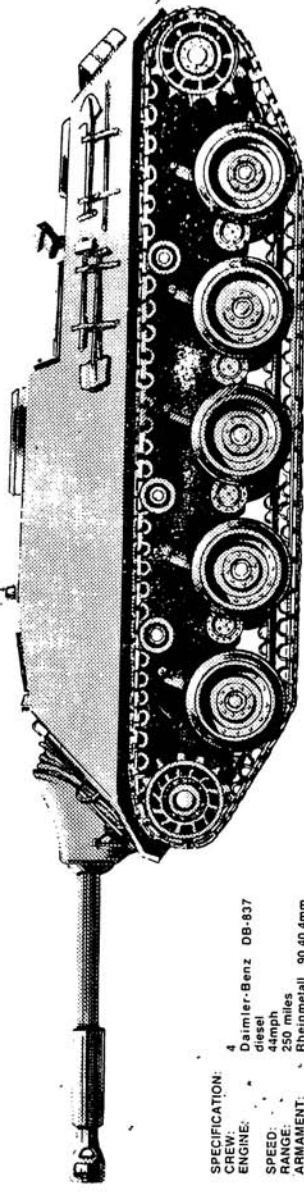
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WEST Germany has a tradition of turretless tanks used essentially as anti-tank vehicles, and was in fact the first major power to use them. The JPz is the only fighting vehicle of its type in service with a Western army and has shown itself to be an ideal weapon for counter-attacks. The notable feature about this tank is its excellent acceleration and exceptionally agile performance which includes a top speed of 44mph in reverse gear. This gives the Jagdpanzer the ability to make sudden and rapid changes of direction, giving it the advantage of surprising enemy tanks with fire from various positions.

No. 16 — JAGDPANZER KANONE JPz 4-5
(WEST GERMANY)

MODERN FIGHTING VEHICLES



SPECIFICATION:
CREW: 4
ENGINE: Daimler-Benz DB-837 diesel
SPEED: 44mph
RANGE: 250 miles
ARMAMENT: Rheinmetall 90 40.4mm cannon, 2 x 7.62mm machine guns, 8 smoke dischargers
COMBAT WEIGHT: 25.7 tons

Death* IN THE *Desert

WHEN Lieutenant Neil Andrews found himself press-ganged into the bunch of ruffians known as "Portland's Pirates", his welcome wasn't a happy one. As the brutal Sergeant Nick Kearney said, "This ain't no Boy Scout troop. There's just one way to get out of our mob, and that's feet-first!"

Yes, being one of Portland's Pirates could be as good as a death sentence, but Neil wasn't ready to die yet!

 **Commando**

